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## CHRISTIANITY AND COMMUNISM



# CHRISTIANITY AND COMMUNISM

*considered by*

DR. ERNEST BARKER

THE VERY REV. W. R. INGE, D.D.

JOHN STRACHEY

THE REV. M. C. D'ARCY, S.J., LL.D.

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DR. REINHOLD NIEBUHR

CANON F. R. BARRY

*and others*

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## INTRODUCTORY

THE seven chapters of which this volume is comprised appeared originally as articles in *The Spectator*. They had been arranged for a purpose, and with some care. No one, even in this country, where Communism has made few converts, can fail to be conscious of an actual, and much more of a potential, rivalry between Christianity as a faith and Communism as a creed. Christianity has been steadily losing its hold on the workers of this country; Communism has been making headway among them—surprisingly small headway, in the light of the hardships and discontents which an average unemployment total of two millions has represented in the past half-dozen years, but headway none the less—while Christianity, we are commonly warned, has been making leeway. In the universities in particular the appeal of Communism has been effective among a school of serious and ardent undergraduates who find nothing to attract them in conventional Christianity as they understand it.

The case, therefore, for an objective examination of Christianity in relation—or contrast—to Communism, and Communism in relation—or

contrast—to Christianity, needs no arguing. But if it is to be argued it must be argued fairly. The statement of each creed must be put at its best by those competent to put it, and apart from the protagonists on either side the subject must be discussed by writers qualified by temperament to hold the balance just, and by knowledge to take every relevant consideration into account. I think it may be claimed that these conditions have been fulfilled. The subject has been approached from many angles. Dr. Inge and Father D'Arcy have denounced Communist doctrine with vigour. Mr. John Strachey has as vigorously defended it. Dr. Ernest Barker, Dr. Joseph Needham, Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr and Canon Barry have all admitted the existence of some common ground between the two faiths (if, which is disputable, Communism may be called a faith) and expressed varying views on their compatibility with one another. *The Spectator* itself has been reproached with some vehemence for permitting the defence of any creed so indefensible as Communism to appear in its columns. Regarding that, neither apology nor extenuation is called for. Completely antagonistic as the paper is to both Fascism and Communism as political creeds, it could no more refuse to discuss them—and discuss them fairly in every aspect—than it could decline to discuss war or white slavery

because it abominates those scourges. The injunction to examine all things and approve what is found to be good has both inherent and apostolic authority, and it applies peculiarly to whatever rival doctrines, political or theological, make their appeal to the minds and hearts of men to-day. Those whose Christian faith is strongest will hesitate least to measure the claims of their religion with those of Communism.

The contrast between the two, as this volume shows, can in any case not be pressed too far. It is impossible to regard Christianity and Communism, judged by their theory as distinct from their practice, as fundamentally and irreconcilably opposed. The one distinctive tenet of Communism, 'from each according to his ability to each according to his need,' is as essentially Christian as 'give to everyone that asketh.' It has proved too Christian for adoption so far in this material world. It has not been adopted in Russia, where, as everywhere else, payment is proportioned to competence and achievement. It is Christian because it derives directly from Christianity. So far as in this country the nation as a whole ministers to those in need—to sickness, to old age, to childhood—on no other ground than their need, it is prompted consciously or subconsciously by the teaching not of Marx but of Christ. But familiarity too easily breeds heedless-

ness, and it is well for Christianity itself that the challenge of Communism should be faced and met. It is not to be met by denying that any ground for challenge exists. It does exist. Again and again in every country in the course of history an official Christianity bearing small resemblance to the Christianity of Christ has thrown its mantle over privilege and wealth and shown itself dead to the cry of the suffering and the disinherited. Even a Communism that lives by exploiting discontent has something to teach a Christianity so decadent or so transcendentalist as to leave the cause of social justice to be defended by its enemies.

An ideal Christianity has nothing to learn from Communism. Yet it may well be true, as in these pages Dr. Needham and Dr. Niebuhr show, and Canon Barry readily concedes, that the acceptance of certain Communist tenets may make the average Christian of to-day a better Christian. There are deep-rooted differences between them. Christianity is concerned with eternal values, and men's actions are shaped in the light of them. Communism concerns itself with this present life, and with the material more than the spiritual. Communism would impose as a rigid code a way of life that has virtue only in so far as it springs from voluntary impulses of the human spirit, checked and directed by faith in a God concerned perpetually and eternally with human affairs.

That the fortunate who profit by their ability should be compelled to share with those who have no ability but great need is good only in so far as it brings material relief to the needy. The man who voluntarily shares the fruit of his ability with his fellow in need is living on a different plane, and one distinctively Christian. But the best of a Communist creed effectively applied is something better than a Christian creed honoured in word and not in deed. So far as Communist teaching causes Christians to consider where they fall short of their own professions, Communism has a service to render to Christianity. But there is one imperative proviso. Christianity can have no part in class-conflict. The conflict may be disguised as the evolution of a single class, an idea essentially germane to a Christianity which preaches unity and the equal worth in the eyes of God of every human soul, but so far as it springs from a fanned flame of antagonism Christianity can have none of it. The end must be attained, but not by destruction and strife.

But when all is said the fact has to be faced that to a considerable section of youth in this country Communism is making a more effective appeal than Christianity. More than that, it is being eagerly embraced as a rival faith. There is much more in this than the attraction of novelty. Youth to-day is predisposed towards a religion of revolt,

and Christianity is apt to figure as a religion of complacency. Revolt against the evils of poverty and unemployment and profiteering and slums may well be exalted into a crusade, in the name of Christianity or Communism or any other creed. And Communism, preaching that gospel more consistently and emphatically than Christianity, finds an open road to the generous heart of a youth which forgets that Communism has little else to preach and Christianity has much. As Dr. Ernest Barker points out, 'the most dangerous antagonists of Christianity have always been those which had some analogy or affinity to it. The strength and the challenge of Mahommedanism depended on its likeness rather than its difference. Perhaps the same is true of the strength and the challenge of Communism.'

So far as Christianity is failing to do its own work it has no right to complain that Communism is trying to take its place. The choice is in its own hands. It would be fatal for Christianity to limit its concern to the next world and leave the field to its critics and opponents in this. Not that such a danger in fact exists; but if the Church is to rally the coming generation to it and fill up its thinning ranks, it must have a gospel to preach that touches life, and is seen to touch it, as Communism does. It is not for a merely ethical Christianity that the world is waiting; that would

be stone instead of bread. It wants the ideal and the spiritual as springs of action, expressed—through hard thought, which is as much a Christian duty as the generation of ardour—in the field of communal as well as individual life. Christianity, if it will, may give the world what Communism never can. If it will not, it cannot grudge Communism its victories.

Such is the thesis, good or bad, to which the articles here reprinted owe their origin. They were inevitably provocative. That was part of their purpose. If they had not provoked opposition there would have been reason to fear that they had failed to provoke reflection. This discussion was transferred to, or rather was broadened out in, the correspondence columns of *The Spectator*, and some extracts from the views thus spontaneously contributed are added as appendices to the articles to which they had special reference. Almost all the original contributions brought critics and commentators into the field, among them writers so discerning and authoritative as Dr. Edwyn Bevan and the Rev. T. S. Gregory, and Mr. Strachey and Father D'Arcy re-entered the lists with rejoinders. While the seven articles which form the main content of this volume are self-contained in themselves, it will, I think, be agreed that the symposium gains in value by the



inclusion of the questions and objections and appreciations which the discussion has prompted in the minds of thoughtful and serious readers.

WILSON HARRIS.

*The Spectator* Office,  
December 1st, 1936.

## I.

### RIVAL FAITHS?

BY DR. ERNEST BARKER

CHRISTIANITY, in the course of the two millennia of its history, has struggled with a number of different rivals or enemies. (It is a comfort to think that it has often gone through fire and flame, and often emerged. *O passi graviora, dabit Deus his quoque finem.*) It struggled with pagan Rome and its emperor-worship; it struggled, in a later age, with Mahommedanism; it struggled, in a still later age, with various forms and phases of 'Enlightenment'—the polished and secular humanism of the Italian Renaissance; the critical and sceptical illumination of the eighteenth-century *Aufklärung*; the scientific materialism of the nineteenth century. To-day the great rival and enemy seems to be Communism.

In one sense Communism inherits and recapitulates the life and tradition of previous rivals. In its cult of the deified Lenin it has some of the features of emperor-worship; in its proselytizing passion it is reminiscent of early Mahommedanism; in its worship of natural science and its calculated materialism it is a new form and phase of En-

lightenment—a new but more secular Renaissance, a new but more critical *Aufklärung*, a new but cruder flowering of science and scientific materialism. In this sense Communism may appear to be the greatest and most consummate enemy of the Christian faith. But in another sense it may also be said that Communism has its analogies or affinities with Christianity, and is not wholly a set or sum of antitheses. Like Christianity (it may be urged), it is a faith; like Christianity, it is a faith which aspires to be universal, and sends out its missionaries to all parts of the earth, from China to Uruguay; like Christianity, it espouses the cause of the poor and humble, and advances the banner of human equality.

It is the last of these analogies or affinities which is the most vital; and on this ground there may well be many earnest Christians who believe that they find Communism in the Sermon on the Mount, and wonder whether the spirit of our Lord's teaching is not to be found in the Kremlin. Perhaps the most dangerous antagonists of Christianity have always been those which had some analogy or affinity to it. The strength and the challenge of Mahommedanism depended on its likeness rather than its difference. Perhaps the same is true of the strength and the challenge of Communism.

It is a grave question which confronts the

Christian Churches in our country to-day. Are they to see in Communism the great and consummate enemy? This seems to be the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church. Seeking to draw strength for itself from the very jaws of peril, it proclaims the antithesis of Catholicism and Communism, and invites into the Catholic fold all who would fain escape from the wolf of Communism. But there are also other would-be saviours from the menace of Communism; and our English Churches, both the Established and the Free, may find themselves in strange company if they make Communism the enemy *par excellence*. The Nazi racial State, with its apotheosis of a pure *Volksstum* (hardly, at bottom, a Christian doctrine), is inviting the world to rally to its defence of Western civilization against the Red menace flaring in the East. The Fascist nationalistic State, with its worship of the superior being and the higher aims of the nation, is ready to rush into the forefront of the fray, and to oppose its conservative scheme of corporativism—for which it may claim, with dubious warrant, the authority of the Papal Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*—to the radical and revolutionary schemes of a destructive Communism.

The very concatenation of the enemies of Communism may lead many members of our Christian Churches to entertain doubts whether it is really

the anti-Christ of our times. They may honestly feel that it has a soul of goodness: they may genuinely believe that it has at least as much of affinity with Christianity as it has of difference. They may hold themselves bound to acknowledge that in its spirit, and by its nature, it, too, is a faith, and that in its content, and by the substance of its teaching, it is a faith which carries a doctrine of human relations and social ethics similar to the Christian doctrine.

But is Communism, in any real sense of the word, a faith? Faith demands some affirmation of belief in things apprehended but invisible: it is a venture of spiritual courage, which leaves the pedestrian ground and takes to the wings of flight. The whole philosophy of Communism is resolutely opposed to faith. It is a philosophy of material causation; and its devotees are vowed to the study of material causes and the production of material effects. They are worshippers of applied science (which is a degree lower than pure science, as pure science, in its turn, is some degrees lower than faith): their true symbols are not the hammer and sickle, which they affect, but the dynamo and the tractor. Their world is a world of matter; and it leaves no room for the supernatural. In a mechanical and mechanized universe there is no place for God; and where Communism enters, with its jejune atheism and its crude anti-God pro-

paganda, all forms of faith are under an interdict.

If Communism cannot be called a faith, neither can it be credited with a social ethic which is like the social ethic of Christianity. It is true that the Communist proclaims the equality of man; and it is true that the Christian also does homage to the cause of equality. But the Communist is willing to sacrifice equality on the altar of efficiency--the altar at which, by virtue of his materialism, he is ultimately bound to kneel. In order to produce a greater amount of material goods (which is his ultimate aim and standard), he will countenance and even encourage a system of inequality which gives more to the producer of more, and less to the producer of less. In order to secure and maintain a planned system for the production of the maximum amount, he will surrender all political power into the hands of a few, or even one, and leave the rest of society an inferior and subject mass. The Christian homage to the cause of equality is too often in practice a mere act of lip-service. (It is the handicap of an old religion that its confessions, by much repetition, become trite and formal, and open the door for unreality and dishonesty. It is the advantage of a brand-new doctrine that its tenets, untested by the acid touch of time, seem to show a fiery honesty.) But the Christian homage to equality, when it is true homage and not lip-service, is more deeply based and more

surely grounded than the Communist proclamation of that cause. There is no altar of material efficiency on which the Christian can logically, or honourably, sacrifice the equality in which he believes. Equality, for him, is rooted and grounded in the nature of the human soul. One soul counts equally with another before God. That equality is ultimate, fundamental, and beyond surrender or sacrifice.

But even if the social ideal of Communism *were* like the social ideal of Christianity, that would not be the end of the matter, or a reason for alliance. The process by which an ideal is realized is almost as important—one may frankly say that it is fully as important—as the ideal itself. The characteristic of the process adopted by Communism is force. Equality, so far as equality is its ideal, is simply enforced. Efficiency, which is its major ideal, is still more simply enforced—ruthlessly enforced. An enforced ideal is a thing utterly opposed to Christianity. If Christianity has at times fallen into the use of force and the ways of persecution, we know to-day that this was a fall and a backsliding. The Christian process is always persuasion—the appeal of one human soul to another. The mode or process of realizing an ideal will always be part of the ideal, and will colour the ideal. One cannot separate means from end. The force which Communism

nplloys as a means colours and darkens its end, and becomes a sad and inseparable part of its end. That is a fundamental ground on which Christianity stands opposed to Communism.

Yet the fact that Christianity is opposed to communism in these different ways is not a reason why Christian Churches should join in a crusade against Communism. A crusade is a resort to the process of force, and a meeting of evil with evil. Persuasion and conversion have always been the true Christian modes of action. In the second place—and this is a consideration which goes still deeper—there *is* a soul of goodness in Communism. In spite of its materialism, in spite of its readiness to sacrifice at the altar of material efficiency, and in spite of its readiness to resort to material force, it has a genuine inward core of conviction (and, where it has triumphed, of practice) which appeals to the general conscience of man. It does seek to distribute material comfort, and material happiness, more evenly: it does seek to give a fairer deal of the material amenities of life to the general mass of ordinary men and women.

Material comfort and happiness is not everything. But it is a very great part of life; and it is seriously and indissolubly united to spiritual comfort and happiness. It is a just accusation of the Communist against the Christian preacher



that he has too much, and too long, confined his preaching to a future expectation of spiritual happiness, and too much, and too long, condoned or even justified the present suffering of material unhappiness. That is a poor sort of asceticism, which we do not even practise ourselves, but simply encourage others to practise. This ascetic tradition has to be banished; and an older and nobler tradition, which is more essentially Christian—a tradition of spreading joy (material as well as spiritual joy) evenly, equally, and in widest commonalty—has to be revived. If we dig into the depths of the Christian inheritance, we shall find doctrines of ‘the common weal’ (held by our own English Reformers, such as Latimer), and of the place of property as a mandate held for the common use and benefit of the common weal, which will enable Christian Churches to lay hold for themselves on the soul of goodness in Communism, by their own inherent and ancient title.

But it is time that we began to dig. The inheritance has been sadly overlaid; and if we do not recover and adorn it for ourselves, it will be seized and squandered by others. Our present distribution of material happiness, so fortuitous and so haphazard, so much the product of chance fortified and hardened by custom, cannot be defended on any ground—except the ground that material happiness is so negligible a thing that its fair

distribution can also be safely neglected. And that is a ground which no Christian Church can take.

### *OBSERVATIONS*

#### THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

When Dr. Barker compares Communism with Christianity I presume that he is thinking of the latter as a religion and not as an institution. He ought, then, to compare it with Communism as an ideal and not with State institutions in Russia, which are merely instruments for realizing that ideal. State and Stalin worship is not a Communist ideal any more than Pope worship should be a Christian one. On the contrary: Communism aims at abolishing the State, and Stalinism is considered to be merely a means to that end. The end may be a long way off, but one cannot expect much after only twenty years when the Church has accomplished so little in two thousand. The doctrine that the labourer is worthy of his hire, to which Dr. Barker takes exception when it is practised in Russia, is Christian and not Communist, but it is a necessary compromise in the present stage of evolution towards the Communist ideal of economic equality. It may be true that to-day the Communist is sacrificing that equality 'on the altar of material efficiency,' but Christians have never ceased to sacrifice it on the altar of material property.

It seems to me that any English Christian who sets out to criticize a new faith (Dr. Barker admits that Communism may be a faith) may soon find himself in a serious dilemma. As a Christian he must believe that the soul is the supreme reality, and that if you first seek the kingdom of God other things will be added. Conversely he must also believe that if the whole body is full of darkness the eye must be evil. Now, whether the body of England is full of darkness may be a matter of opinion,

but there are already many who think so, and those among them who are Christians will hold the Church, the guardian of the nation's soul, responsible. The rapid decay of standards, codes and values, of 'old English virtues,' healthy instincts and sound taste, they will attribute to previous spiritual death.

To such people it will appear axiomatic that the nation will not find its feet again until it finds its soul. There is, however, a grave danger (from the Christian point of view) that it may find that soul outside the Church. This has already happened in Communist and Fascist countries, where, as a result, the Christian Churches have been persecuted or absorbed. I know that it may be objected that these political movements are not true faiths, or that they are anti-Christ in the guise of Christ. Space does not permit an answer to these objections, and I can only record a belief that these great movements, which are now swaying millions of the most virile inhabitants of our globe, owe much of their vitality to a spiritual awakening. Should something of a like nature happen to us it is just possible that we might then say to our Churches and even to Christianity: under your spiritual guidance we lost our good name, our poetry, our countryside, our belief in eternal values, our physical health and beauty; so we have no further use for you. If the Christian Church does not awaken England, England may wake up outside the Christian Church.—LIONEL TRIPP.

### THE MEANING OF FAITH

Dr. Ernest Barker limits unduly the meaning of 'faith' when he says 'the whole philosophy of Communism is opposed to faith,' and defines faith as 'belief in the invisible.'

Communists have faith in human nature, faith that Right will triumph over Might (though they do not leave Right unarmed), faith in the emergence of justice and

radeship from the welter of struggling and selfish throat competitors, faith that equality of chances in will give better results than the harsh and unerved social distinctions of our present system.

submit that faith of this kind is finer, more creative, more humane than the faith which the schoolboy so gently defined as 'belief in what you know to be true.'—HAMILTON L'YFE.

## II.

### THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

BY THE VERY REV. W. R. INGE, D.D.

I CANNOT continue this discussion quite on the lines laid down by my friend Prof. Barker. The facts, in my opinion, have been obscured by the dust of controversy, stirred up by fear, passion and hatred on both sides. We must get behind slogans and catchwords to things as they are.

The word Communism, says Henry Sidgwick, should be 'restricted to those schemes for equalizing distribution which discard or override the principle that a labourer's remuneration should be proportioned to the value of his labour.' 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.' This is the fundamental principle of Communism. The claim of the worker is not based on the value of his work, but simply on the ground that he exists. The appeal is not economic, but sentimental or humanitarian.

This being so, it is absurd to suppose that Communism exists in Russia. In that country piece-work, payment by results, is the rule, though there are hundreds of thousands of slaves, political prisoners, who receive no wages at all.

There are many incomes in four figures; a hundred thousand motor-cars were sold last year to private persons; and above all, the citizens are encouraged to invest their savings in government bonds, which pay a relatively high rate of interest—formerly 8 per cent., now 4 per cent.

Communism in Russia is a mere façade, behind which a very formidable nationalist, militarist, totalitarian State, based not on Communism but on State-capitalism, is being forged. The Russian Government foments and subsidizes insurrections in other countries, not with any expectation or hope of a world-revolution, but in order to paralyse anti-Russian policy in all parts of the world. This was not the dream of the doctrinaires who made the revolution in 1917, but 'Trotskyism' has been drowned in the blood of Lenin's gangsters. The revolution, like other revolutions, has devoured its own children.

The Fascist and Nazi governments, on their side, see their interest in keeping the terror of 'Bolshevism' alive, though the present Russian Government is not very unlike their own. They have this excuse, that the danger of a *culbute générale* is really greater in the West. Marx was not exactly a Communist, if we accept Sidgwick's definition; but he appealed to that blend of idealism and hatred which is the driving force in revolutions. His theory was a typical product of

Western and nineteenth-century conditions, which never had any relevance to the semi-oriental State of Russia before 1917. Besides this, Russia has had the fever, and is recovering from it.

I propose, then, to say nothing more about Russia. Our revolutionists will soon discover that the land of their dreams has let them down badly.

'The riches and goods of Christians are not common, as touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as certain Anabaptists do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability.' (Articles of Religion, XXXVIII.) What has been, and is, the attitude of Christianity, to equalitarian schemes of distribution?

The original Gospel was purely Oriental in its profound indifference to almost all that we mean by civilization. The attitude of Christ to political and economic struggles was one of almost contemptuous detachment. 'Man, who made me a judge or divider over you?' 'Take heed and beware of all covetousness.' The covetous man is 'thou fool,' not 'thou thief.' Christ gives us a new standard of values, and the law of love. The alleged Communism of the Jerusalem Church was a purely voluntary pooling of effects. The primitive Church, on this side, was rather like a

fit society under generous management; but the rule, 'if a man will not work, neither shall he eat' was observed as far as possible.

When Christianity became a European religion, it inevitably came under the influence of Hellenistic ideas. The dominant schools of thought were those of Plato and the Stoa, which were partially amalgamated under the syncretistic system of Neoplatonism. On the whole, it would be true to say that Christian philosophy was Platonic, Christian ethics Stoical, but no one then disputed that philosophy, ethics, and religion are very closely connected.

The so-called Communism of Plato had nothing to do with economics. It was a desperate attempt to devise a system of government which would be both efficient and honest. Plato's solution was to give the power to a class of ascetic lay-priests, who were to have no opportunity of feathering their own nests. Plato was not a Communist like Marx; he was a Hildebrandian before Hildebrand. The Catholic Church was an attempt to realize Plato's Republic. Even after the rise of the secular clergy, or at least the higher ranks, had become rich and worldly, the ideal life might be found in the monasteries, where some of the communal rules of Plato's 'Guardians' were observed. History, so far, favours the conclusion that Communism can be made to succeed only in



rather small communities, under a rule of celibacy, and with a religious basis. The numerous Communistic sects in America have not lasted long. Some have broken up; others have failed commercially; others, very characteristically, have been turned into tontines, the last Communist being an aged and childless millionaire.

More important, for our present subject, is the Stoical conception of natural law, developed by the Roman jurists and adopted by Christianity. Natural law was promulgated by God in making human nature. No government can abrogate it or dispense from it. Things forbidden by natural law are forbidden because they are wrong; transgressions of human, positive law are wrong only because they are forbidden. Human laws, however, may be said to come indirectly from God, since 'the powers that be are ordained of God'; but 'a law which contravenes natural law must be disobeyed' (Origen); 'an unjust law is no law' (Suarez); 'in the court of conscience there is no obligation to obey an unjust law' (Thomas Aquinas). So even in the Digest: 'No consideration of civil right can affect the force of natural right.'

This assertion of an absolute law of right and wrong is part of the belief in absolute values, a revelation of the will and character of God himself, which is an essential part of Christianity.

The theories, now blatantly proclaimed, that the State is the creator of right and wrong; that reasons of State justify any crime; that ethics are a purely individual matter, are flatly and irreconcilably opposed to Christianity. The worship of the God-State, from our point of view, is pure Satanism. Since there is no logical reason why the State alone should be exempted from conformity to ethical standards, it is certain that other corporations, societies, factions and parties will claim the same privileges. The end of this monstrous doctrine is not only *regna regnis lupi*, but *homo homini lupus*. As the old Edda sings: 'Wind time! Wolf time! There shall come a day When every man on earth His brother man shall slay.'

But what are the contents of the law of nature? The Stoics maintained that all human institutions, including private property, are not part of the absolute law of nature, but that they are part of the relative law of nature, adapted to human beings living together. The Church interpreted this as meaning that though in heaven there is no private ownership, no marriage, no law, and of course no war, all these institutions belong, by the will of God, to 'man's fallen state.' They must be accepted as right and necessary while we live here.

This was and is the doctrine of the Great Church. It is not quite conclusive against Social-

ism, because the right to private property depends on its being honestly acquired, and it may be forfeited, like the other natural rights, to life and liberty, by gross misuse. We must also bear in mind that there have been frequent revolts against the acceptance of a relative, admittedly imperfect, natural law, not only in the monasteries, which aimed at a nearer approach to the ideal, but in several sects, of which the Anabaptists are the best known. 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell thy goods.' The Great Church accepted a double standard, an honours course for the spiritually ambitious, and a pass degree for the majority; but, said the sectaries, did not Christ say 'Be ye perfect' to us all?

The Church has always laid more stress on consumption than on distribution. It is or should be politically neutral, since the same passions animate all political parties. It has never favoured economic equality, but it regards 'riches' as morally dangerous. Above all, it can never see a rival, but only a deadly enemy, in any movement which is based on hatred, and on the negation of all spiritual values.

### III.

## THE CLAIMS OF COMMUNISM

BY JOHN STRACHEY

'THE facts,' writes Dean Inge, in his article on the claims of Communism and Christianity, 'have been obscured by the dust of controversy, stirred up by fear, passion and hatred on both sides.' Who would deny it? It is difficult to refrain, however, from pointing out how substantial has been Dean Inge's own contribution to the fear, passion and hatred of which he complains. For example, I notice that he alludes to us, his opponents in this controversy, as 'Lenin's gangsters.' Is not this a perfect example of those 'slogans and catch-words' which, he tells us, 'we must get behind, in order to discover things as they are'?

It will be worth while to correct some of the errors of fact on the subject of Communism into which Dean Inge has fallen. For in the process the nature of the basic claims of Communism will emerge. Dean Inge, quoting Henry Sidgwick, tells us that Communism is a particular arrangement of distribution, namely, that based upon the principle of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.' Now, it is true

that Communists believe that this would be the best possible method of distribution, and that when a long series of technical, social, economic and psychological pre-requisites have been established, it will be possible to base human society on this principle. But to suggest that the word Communism should be 'restricted' (as Dean Inge proposes) to Utopian schemes for establishing such a system of distribution here and now is manifestly absurd. For if we did so we should have to decide that none of the members of the Communist Parties of the world were Communists. For no present-day Communist proposes any such thing.

Indeed, as Dean Inge remarks, 'Marx was not exactly a Communist, if we accept Sidgwick's definition.' This is delightful. Marx, the founder of the world-wide Communist movement, is ruled out by Mr. Sidgwick and Dean Inge. It is a little as if in a controversy on the nature of Christianity I adopted a definition of that religion which made it necessary for me to admit that its founder was 'not exactly' a Christian! But it is quite true that if we adopted the Sidgwick definition we should have to decide that Marx was not a Communist. For Marx always unequivocally condemned all attempts (such as those of Robert Owen) to found societies upon the principle of 'from each according to his ability and to each according to his need'.

Dean Inge's extensive confusions on the subject of the Soviet Union arise from his adoption of Sidgwick's totally inadequate definition of Communism. It is quite true that the Soviet Union is not a Communist society. But then, it has never dreamt of claiming to be one. The Soviet Union is a Socialist society. And Socialism is that system of society which Communists strive, and always have striven, to see established.

Now, a Socialist society is one in which the means of production (namely, the factories, mines and farms) have been taken out of private hands and have been placed in the hands of the community, which operates them on the basis of an annual, or five years', plan in order to produce goods for the use of its citizens. (If Dean Inge has any doubts whether this transfer of ownership has actually taken place in the Soviet Union, he should ask some of the former owners of Russian means of production.) Second, a Socialist society is one in which the goods and services produced from these publicly-owned means of production are distributed 'on the principle that a labourer's remuneration shall be proportioned to the value of his labour' (to return to Mr. Sidgwick).

This is the principle of distribution proposed by Marx and Engels (see *The Critique of the Gotha Programme*, by Marx, and the *Anti-Dühring*, by Engels, especially), and now put into practice by

Lenin and Stalin. To suppose that the establishment of this principle of distribution for the products of publicly-owned means of production means a return to capitalism on the part of the Soviet authorities is pure ignorance. Marx, Engels and Lenin have been universally considered (up till Dean Inge's championship of the claims of the late Mr. Sidgwick) to be the decisive authorities on the subject of Communism. No one who had taken the precaution to read their relevant works could possibly doubt that they would have hailed the present economic arrangements of the Soviet Union as the fulfilment of their proposals for an economic order alternative to capitalism.

This, in a word, is the essential claim of Communism. We claim that there now exists, both in theory and practice, an order of society based on the public ownership of the means of production and their operation for use. Such a society, and such a society alone, enables mankind to use to the full its present incomparable capacity to produce. In so doing it solves the economic problem. A community adopting this system of economic relationships can certainly abolish poverty, unemployment, economic crises and war. (For poverty and unemployment are clearly but the antithetical effects of our present inability to use an important part of our means of production. Periodic economic crises, and the ever-growing

strains and stresses between the States and Empires of the capitalistic world, can also be shown to be directly consequential upon our inability adequately to use our means of production so long as we maintain our present, capitalist, system of economic relationships.)

But, it may be asked, what kind of social relationships do Communists propose that we should build on this economic basis? In this connexion I should like to clear up a point dealt with by Professor Barker in the first article of this series. He tells us that 'the Communist proclaims the equality of man but . . . is willing to sacrifice equality on the altar of efficiency—the altar at which by virtue of his materialism he is ultimately bound to kneel.'

Communists, however, have never proclaimed the equality of man. On the contrary, Communist theory and practice has always been based on the obvious truth that men are born with unequal capacities and needs. Precisely for this reason Communists believe that they should enjoy equal opportunities to develop their unequal capacities and to satisfy their unequal needs. For only so can society arrange itself in a just and rational pattern of social relationships. Moreover, we hold that the essential condition of such equality of opportunity is that everyone should enjoy free and equal access to the means of production. For the



means of production are the very means of life. So long as a relatively small class owns the essential means of life the rest of the community can only obtain access to them upon conditions imposed by this owning class. Yet with access men cannot live. In such conditions there can be no equality of opportunity. Hence equality which Communists proclaim is the abolition of classes. (Engels goes so far as to say that any demand for equality which goes beyond the demand for the abolition of classes 'passes into absurdity'.)

But what, it may be asked, do we mean by the abolition of social classes? Now, the category of social class is not some vague conception of rich and poor, ill-paid or well-paid. A social class is defined according to its members' relation to the productive system. In contemporary society, for example, the two great social classes are differentiated by the fact that their members respectively derive their income from ownership of the means of production and from the sale of their ability to work. It is the source, not the size, of a man's income which puts him in one class or another. If his income comes predominantly from ownership, he is a member of the capitalist class. If his income

Classes can, then, be abolished, and a homogeneous, classless community established by the abolition of incomes derived from ownership, and by this alone. In a classless society men and women are paid unequal amounts for their unequal work. But the better-paid, more skilled workers do not form a separate class from the less well-paid workers. For all are workers deriving their incomes from an identical source, that is, their work for society.

This is precisely the condition of affairs which has been established in the Soviet Union. The ever-growing prosperity of the Soviet Union already enables the better-paid workers to enjoy many of the amenities and luxuries which are almost exclusively reserved in this country for members of the capitalist class. But this is not a sign of the return of capitalism to the Soviet Union, as Dean Inge, hopefully, supposes it to be. Dean Inge tells us that 100,000 motor-cars were last year sold in the Soviet Union to private persons. I must thank him for this striking example (of which I was unaware, but which I shall now frequently repeat) of the rapidity with which prosperity is coming to the Soviet people.

For it is not the possession of a motor-car which makes a man a capitalist. What makes a man a capitalist is the possession of a motor-car-producing factory (or a share in such a factory).

No one is paid an income because he possesses a motor-car. But in the capitalist world men are paid an income if they own a share in a motor-car-producing factory. Dean Inge could prove that capitalism was being reintroduced in the Soviet Union if he could produce a Soviet citizen who had acquired, not a motor-car, but a share in a motor-car-producing factory. But he will never be able to do that.

To sum up. This, then, is the claim of Communism. The working citizens of advanced communities such as Great Britain have only to assume possession of the means of production with which they now work, and operate them for use on a planned basis, distributing the resultant products according to the value of the work which each citizen does, in order to produce general plenty and permanent peace. Moreover, they can, by the adoption of these measures of economic reorganization, constitute a homogeneous, classless society. They can thus free themselves from those painful, and in the end disastrous, strains and stresses which must rack any community which is divided into rich owners and poor non-owners of the means of production.

## OBSERVATIONS

## COMMUNISM AND SOCIALISM

These Communists are really very puzzling people. Some years ago Mr. Bernard Shaw defined both Socialism and Communism in *The Spectator* with characteristic lucidity. He said, 'As no other distribution than an equal one will bear examination, Socialism means in effect an equal distribution of the National income . . . Communism is the same as Socialism but better English.' For years I have relied upon these definitions, but now comes Mr. John Strachey who tells us that Soviet Russia is not a Communist but a Socialist society, that Communism means an order of society based on the public ownership of the means of production, but that it does not mean, and never has meant, equal incomes for unequal work.

Exactly how Mr. Strachey distinguishes between a Communist and a Socialist society does not very clearly appear. He may be correct in asserting that unequal remuneration for unequal work is a principle of Communism, but he is certainly wrong in suggesting that Lenin and Stalin have consistently followed it. I would invite Mr. Strachey's attention to Stalin's address to the Communist Party in the summer of 1931—'unforeseen financial difficulties have been encountered,' he said, 'and changes are necessary. The five-day week must be abandoned, at least temporarily, in favour of the interrupted six-day week. In a number of undertakings wage-rates are arranged in such a way that the difference between skilled and unskilled labour, between arduous and light labour, almost disappears. Wages even under Socialism must be paid according to work done and not according to needs.' From this it would appear that the principle of equal incomes had been tried and was departed from because in practice it had broken down. It was only after 1931 that the principle of unequal wages for different work was generally enforced. The further develop-

ment of piecework came later. The glorification of the Stakhanoff movement, a movement which would assuredly provoke a general strike in this country, is the most recent development of all.

Then Mr. Strachey tells us that the possession of a motor-car does not make a man a capitalist, but the possession of a share in a motor-car factory does. Will Mr. Strachey tell us what is the position of a man who owns some of the high interest-bearing State bonds which the Soviet issues to its citizens from time to time? Is there any essential difference between the investor who profits by the output of a factory and him who draws his interest from the State which depends upon the labour of all? Surely Dean Inge is substantially correct. The evolution from approximately equal to unequal wages, to piecework, and finally to intensive individual work, has gone on in Russia for the last five years and produced much the same sort of economic inequalities, although on an altogether lower plane, as exist in capitalist countries, and the investors in State bonds are the new capitalists. When Mr. Strachey suggests that Dr. Inge alluded to his controversial opponents as 'Lenin's gangsters,' he is of course mistaken. The allusion was obviously to the spiritual Fathers of the Bolshevik millennium—Trotsky, Kameneff, Zinoviev, and the rest. Does not Mr. Strachey agree, or can it be that he differs from Stalin in this matter?

Finally, Mr. Strachey concludes by telling us the rich blessings which will accrue to everybody in the Communist (or is it the Socialist?) State. He really must not be allowed to forget that Socialism has been operating in Russia for eighteen years, and that five years ago those who died from hunger in the Ukraine, the richest food producing district in Europe, were numbered by millions.

SIR FREDERIC HAMILTON.

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For a long time I have sought for an authoritative statement of the essential respects in which the position of the Communist differs from that of a Socialist. I assume that there is an essential difference, or otherwise Socialists in this country, as embodied in the Labour Party, would not so gravely distrust and dislike those who label themselves as Communists. It was therefore with considerable hope of enlightenment that I turned to the last article in *The Spectator* on 'The Claims of Communism.' Here, I said, is a Communist, for so I take the writer to be, who will explain his faith, and incidentally perhaps will resolve my difficulties.

What do I find? Alas! I find no enlightenment. I am told in one place that 'The Soviet Union is not a Communist Society. . . . The Soviet Union is a Socialist Society,' and in another that Marx, the founder of the world Communist movement and a decisive authority on the subject of Communism, would have held the present economic arrangements of the Soviet Union as the fulfilment of his proposals. I cannot reconcile these two statements, and I, and I am sure others of your readers, would be glad to know how Mr. Strachey reconciles them.

Perhaps Mr. Strachey could see his way to explain to us briefly the difficulties between a Socialist and a Communist, and between a Socialist and a Communist Society.—SIR HENRY FOUNTAIN.

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#### LENIN'S ASSOCIATES

Mr. Strachey is surely inconsistent. He blames me for distinguishing between State Socialism and Communism—which I had to do if I was to handle my prescribed subject intelligently—and then draws the same distinction himself. He also objects to my using the word 'gangsters' of the group of bloodthirsty criminals who surrounded Lenin. He oddly thinks that I used the word,

not of Stalin, Trotsky, Djerzhinsky and Zinovieff, but of 'Us.' I did not mean to call Mr. Strachey a gangster; I did not know that his association with the orgies of the Cheka went beyond sympathetic admiration. As for the subject of my article—the attitude of the Church in the past towards revolutionary theories—it does not seem to interest him.—THE VERY REV. DR. W. R. INGE.

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I should like to suggest that in the interesting discussion of Communism which has recently taken place in *The Spectator*, much too little attention has been paid to the essential difference between Communism as an *ideal*, and *actual* Communism, as a political manifestation.

Many of your correspondents argue as if what was now taking place in Russia under the name of Communism was, more or less, the ideal Communism of the New Testament. It is surely something utterly different. It is in fact for propaganda purposes chiefly that it is called Communism. There is a saying in Russia 'We used to have seven classes; now we have seventeen!'

Miss Ethel Mannin, a left-wing witness, when she returned from Russia, commented on the appalling differences in wealth between the classes. She saw large expensive villas, the residences of Commissars, and a hundred yards away miserable hovels, filthy and insanitary, where proletarians lived.

In *I Speak for the Silent*, by Tchernovin, we find a terrible picture of the sufferings of the expropriated peasants and others in modern Russia. These wretched men are looked upon, and treated, hardly as human beings. They die off like flies in prison camps. (All this is related from personal experience.)

Why, I ask, should this be called *Communism*? Such a social system does not express the spirit or aims of genuine Communists. It is rather a ruthless State capitalism, creating new classes separated by social and

economic gulfs. It is a new class tyranny established in the interests of a hierarchy of fanatics. It is a thousand pities that Christian men and women should be persuaded to look with favour upon a system so cruel, so intolerant, and so far removed from what real Communism would be in practice.—DR. MEYRICK BOOTH.

### THE COMMUNIST STATE

Mr. Strachey's article in last week's *Spectator* gives at least a simple definition of Communism which is illuminating. State ownership of all means of production (and presumably, of distribution), and the abolition of private ownership of any such means, is straightforward in theory, if not in practice. All men have then equal opportunity to gain unequal rewards according to their abilities. They enjoy the fruits of their labour, which may be large for those of outstanding ability, or small for those only capable of unskilled work. If this definition of Communism be acceptable to the party itself, what, then, is the difference between Socialism and Communism? Why, if their ideals are the same, are so many members of the Labour Party afraid of being associated with Communism? Is the distinction *only* one of method and of acceleration?

The question as to which means of production and distribution should be owned and organized by the State is surely one to be decided on the merits of each case by the canons of efficiency, economy and expediency. It is time that such problems were settled as far as possible by economists and scientists, by civil servants and men of affairs, in the impartial atmosphere of the office and laboratory. The issues are too technical and too much complicated to be made into party war-cries for the attraction of those who have no knowledge or experience of their difficulties. The State-owned telephone service in England is fully as efficient and economical as the privately-owned service in the United States and elsewhere;



but equally, some privately-owned railways satisfactory as others which are owned by the State.

Dean Inge condemns Communism because of its force. Here we must, I think, remember to distinguish between the force used and misused in the attainment of power, and that used and misused after power has been attained. One cannot condone the atrocities of the Russian Revolution, any more than those of the French or Spanish revolutions. But in all fairness it must be admitted that these horrors do not necessarily invalidate the claims of Communism any more than the wars of religion invalidated the claims of Christianity. It is, however, peculiar to ask Mr. Strachey how he proposes to attain his communistic ideal in this and other countries. Does he contemplate, the end justifying the means, a similar catalogue of horrors in England, or has he some kindly alternative with which to put out of action, temporarily or permanently, those who oppose his revolution?

We come now, I think, to the crux of the question. Having attained power, how does Mr. Strachey propose that his totalitarian State be organized and governed? Ideals, however worthy, must have some practical means for their realization. Is a Lenin or a Stalin essentially a Communist State? Where are those to be found who have the ability to organize a State in which all the means of production and of distribution are run by one great Civil Service? It may be an exaggeration to say that the system matters less than the men who run it, but we would like to know how our existing organizations are to be replaced, and by whom. How are the rulers of the Communist State to be chosen, and who is to make the final decisions? If one may judge by the expressions of opinion of our present-day Communists and Socialists, there are likely to be some considerable differences of opinion among them when, if ever, they attain power. The present so-called governing classes would probably be in exile. at the least: has the Communist

enough leaders of distinction, enough unanimity of aim and method, enough experience, of practical affairs, even enough intelligence, adequately to replace them? It must be remembered that the Communists will have a much more complicated State to organize, and that, in order to justify themselves, they will have to make a greater success of their government than their less ambitious predecessors.

We are forced to the conclusion that Communism implies a Dictatorship just as much as does Fascism. This is an issue of more vital importance to the man in the street than that of the extent of State interference and ownership. Does Mr. Strachey admit this? And if so, are even his ideals worth the price?—E. R. COCHRANE.

#### SPIRITUAL VALUES

The Christian objection to Marx's dialectical materialism is that it flatly denies all spiritual values. It is not the social or political aspect of Communism that estranges a Christian, but that philosophical basis of crude materialism which Marx invented for its support, and his disciples still insist upon. The irreconcilable conflict between a spiritual and a material philosophy cannot be resolved, or in any way affected, by irrelevant instances of the failure of disciples to live up to their creeds.

Let it be granted that Christian Popes and priests have often been venal and corrupt, and Christian laymen often little better than heathens. Let us grant that Communists often argue, and even behave, as if they admitted the reality of an everlasting, transcendental difference between right and wrong. Their respective creeds leave them both equally without philosophical or logical defence. It only means, what every student of human nature knows, that men will always succumb to their natural instincts when they find their creeds too

difficult to put into practice. But that does not mean that it does not matter what a man's creed is. For the leaders of men take their philosophies seriously, and will teach this or that according to their creeds, and their teaching will lead to a popular bias in favour of a spiritual or a material ideology. Now Christian ideology, however far Christians fail it, does 'make for righteousness.' Materialism, at best, can only make for material well-being. It cannot make for righteousness because it does not believe that there is any such thing, and it must inevitably and for ever be repudiated by those for whom spiritual values are the final and eternal Reality.

—D. IRVING MUNTZ.

#### A DEFINITION BY LENIN

Referring to the most interesting letters published in *The Spectator* of November 6th, on Communism and Socialism, and the difference between them, may I add a graphic description which I heard years ago from Lenin in Zurich? He said: 'Socialism is like soda-water poured into the whisky; it very soon fizzles out, leaving undiluted Communism.'—VLADIMIR DE KOROSTOVETZ.

#### A REPLY FROM MR. STRACHEY

A whole group of the questions I have been asked turn on the question of the difference between Communism and Socialism. The difference is simply this. Both are societies in which the means of production are publicly owned and operated, on a plan, for use. In Socialism, however, the resulting products are distributed in accordance with the value of the work done by each individual worker. In Communism the resultant products are distributed in accordance with the needs of the recipients. And this involves (as Socialism does not) the abolition of that individual incentive to work which is provided by increased individual remuneration for better or harder work.

The Soviet Union is a Socialist society, not a Communist society. It is, however, the fulfilment of the proposals of Marx, Lenin and all other Communists. For we have always stated, in the most precise manner possible (see, for example, the *April Theses* of Lenin), that we worked for the establishment of Socialism as the immediate alternative to Capitalism, and only looked forward to Communism as something which must evolve out of Socialism. This, I hope, explains our position to Sir Henry Fountain, who could not understand how I could reconcile the two statements that the Soviet Union was Socialist, not Communist, and that Marx would have hailed it as a fulfilment of his proposals.

Sir Frederic Hamilton objects that Mr. Bernard Shaw does not agree with my definitions of Socialism and Communism. That is quite true. The explanation is a simple one. Mr. Shaw is wrong. He is wrong, not because he disagrees with me, but because he disagrees with every other instructed Socialist and Communist who has ever written on the subject. Of course, Mr. Shaw was at liberty to re-define the words in a new sense, if he had explained that this was what he was doing. But he has never done this and has thus caused very considerable confusion.

It is not the case, as Sir Frederic Hamilton supposes, that Lenin and Stalin first attempted to establish equality of wages in the Soviet Union and only subsequently abandoned this attempt. For example, I myself spent six weeks in the Donbas coal fields in 1928, and studied the wages system in some detail. Higher wages for skilled work and piece work were both in full operation in the Donbas at that time. What is true, however, is that there were certain people in the Soviet Union who, failing to understand the character of Socialism, pressed for a greater equalization of wages. But they never received any countenance from the Government. If Sir Frederic Hamilton will look again at the quotation he

makes from Stalin, he will see that what Stalin is saying is precisely that 'in a number of undertakings' wage-rates (under the pressure of such people) were (in 1931) beginning to approximate, and that this tendency must be combated, because, as Stalin wrote, 'under Socialism wages must be paid according to work done and not according to needs.'

Dr. Inge complains that I blame him 'for distinguishing between State Socialism and Communism,' and then drawing the same distinction myself. But, if Dr. Inge will look again at his article, he will see that he distinguished between Communism and 'State Capitalism,' which is presumably the antithesis of State Socialism. He alleged that the Soviet system was State Capitalism. I would not have dreamt of objecting if he had said that the Soviet system was Socialism.

Sir Frederic Hamilton thinks that Dr. Inge was alluding only to the followers of Trotsky and Zinovieff when he spoke of 'Lenin's gangsters'; but, as Dr. Inge himself has now stated in his letter, he was alluding to 'Stalin, Trotsky, Djerzhinsky, Zinovieff,' and the rest of the Russian Communists indiscriminately. Hence I cannot help supposing that he was in reality alluding to all Communists, including British Communists like myself who, I assure him, go a good deal beyond sympathetic admiration of what is being done in the Soviet Union. Of course, we are so used to being called gangsters and, as Dr. Inge now adds, in his letter, 'blood-thirsty criminals,' that the point would not have been worth mentioning, had not Dr. Inge coupled these characteristic expressions with a plea for getting away from catch-words, prejudice, and the dust and heat of controversy. It was this combination which, I confess, struck me as a little quaint.

Sir Frederic Hamilton thinks that the holders of Soviet bonds are the new capitalists of the Soviet Union. Here, I think, he is making a point of some substance. It has

always seemed to me that the existence of State interest-bearing bonds, into which the Russian workers can put their savings, is an anomaly in a Socialist society. It is, however, at the present stage of development of the Soviet Union, an entirely necessary anomaly. It will remain in existence until a much higher degree of universal plenty has been attained than now exists in the Soviet Union, or anywhere else. For, until such general plenty, and such perfect social services, have been established that no one feels any need to save for his old age, etc., individual savings are a necessity. However, the anomaly is quite a small one. The Soviet bond-holders have no more control or influence over Soviet industry than the depositors in the Post Office Savings Bank have over the Post Office.

As a matter of fact, there are several other anomalous features in the Socialism of the Soviet Union. There are remaining Capitalist elements in Russian society just as there are Socialist elements in British society. We have to judge human communities by their predominant characteristics. Nothing human is ever perfectly and completely true to its type. The substantial fact is that Capitalist elements in British society, and Socialist elements in Russian society, have overwhelming predominance.—JOHN STRACHEY.

#### AN ARGUMENT WITH DR. INGE

Dr. Inge, having been taken to task by Mr. Strachey for calling Communists 'gangsters,' improves the amenities of debate by referring to the 'blood-thirsty criminals who surrounded Lenin.' If Dr. Inge were to turn to any of Lenin's exceedingly dry philosophical works, such as *Materialism and Empiro-Criticism*, he would certainly have cause to wonder how any gang of blood-thirsty criminals came to surround such a leader, who, even in his political writings, is constantly engaged in doctrinal controversies more suggestive of theological disputations

than blood-thirsty crime. Perhaps Dr. Inge chooses to be a pragmatist himself and to judge by results, thinking of innocent blood shed at Lenin's bidding or in his name; but by that standard he must also condemn every Czar, every General and many statesmen and judges as blood-thirsty criminals. Yet Dr. Inge was never a pacifist. It is very puzzling for one would not expect so fine a swordsman as Dr. Inge to descend to the level of the learned Judge who in sentencing some workmen to penal servitude for attempting Communist propaganda among soldiers said 'You may call yourselves politicians, but I regard you as common criminals'—while ruling out as irrelevant any reference by the Defence to the incitement of the troops to mutiny by three Unionist politicians, all of whom became members of the Cabinet and of the House of Lords—one as Home Secretary and another as Lord Chancellor.

Of course, on the hustings we all think of our opponents as certainly common and probably criminal: Capitalists and Communists call one another thieves and robbers with equal sincerity on both sides, while mere Whigs like myself regret that the Conservatives are not quite gentlemen and the Communists are not quite all there. But the expression of these feelings ought really to be restrained on the Bench, in the pulpit and in *The Spectator*.

Dr. Inge's hatred of Bolshevism leads him to name four 'gangsters' in particular—Stalin, Trotsky, Djerzhinsky and Zinovieff. What really does he know of the personal characters of any of these four men? Lenin, who was the soul of candour, made some very frank criticisms of the failings of both Stalin and Zinovieff which Dr. Inge can look up in his file of *Pravda* for the years 1917 to 1928, or if he has mislaid his original Russian documents I can furnish him with references to authenticated English or French translations. Lenin made Zinovieff Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet and of the Comintern

(equivalent, say, to being Mayor of Liverpool and President of the League of Nations Union) and Stalin Secretary of the Party—why? It was to keep both off the Sovnarkom (Council of Peoples' Commissars) because he despised Zinovieff as gun-shy and disliked Stalin's peremptory and bureaucratic way with peasant and working-class people, to whom Lenin, like Dr. Inge's Master, dedicated his life. But neither were ever blood-thirsty criminals or gangsters in the eyes of Lenin, whose judgment was not rendered the less acute by the saintliness of his own life. Grossly ignorant prejudice apart, there is no difference of opinion as to the nobility of Lenin's own character among people—Communist or non-Communist—who knew him personally whether it was as dictator of Russia or as reader in the British Museum. I am taking it for granted that a man of Dr. Inge's intellectual integrity does not express an opinion about Bolshevism unless he is acquainted at the very least with (a) books in which leading Bolsheviks themselves (and not through the medium of Bloomsbury apologists) expound their faith; (b) first-hand biographies of Lenin and his 'gang' (ample available in English); and (c) the revised view of the Soviet achievement expressed by such inveterate but honest foes as Sir Bernard Pares.

It is quite possible, however, that Dr. Inge, in the course of his researches—I assume researches, for he would not rely on the Riga correspondent of his daily paper—has been genuinely misled about his two remaining 'gangsters' or 'blood-thirsty criminals,' Trotsky and Djerzhinsky, for the deeds of the former have been obscured or misrepresented by Comintern propagandists since he went into opposition and exile, while Djerzhinsky was so self-effacing a man that his detractors have had their own way. Dr. Inge should know that he has missed a great intellectual treat if he has never read any of the books of Trotsky, whose wide if not very profound range and Voltairian journalistic wit have much in



common with Dr. Inge's own polemical style. Excellent English translations of his principal works are to be obtained not from the Communist Party but from old-fashioned London firms of publishers. If he had not proved himself in the Russian Civil War the greatest soldier since Napoleon, Trotsky's writings would still entitle him to be admired as the most readable living historian after Winston Churchill.

Djerzhinsky loathed his work. When it became apparent to the proletarian dictatorship that victory depended not only on defeating the White Armies without but the counter-revolution within, no Communist could be found willing to organize the necessary terror. For Lenin and his 'gang' of 'blood-thirsty criminals' were in truth idealists who had graduated in the Czarist prisons, in the British Museum reading-room, in the cafés of Geneva, ready to fight on the barricades when the time came as it did, but the organization of the *Tcheka*, necessary though it was, was so abhorrent to all of them that they had to turn to the ultra-sensitive Djerzhinsky, the beloved altruist, the best, most self-sacrificing Communist of them all, who had never been known to shirk obeying an order of the Party. And so, by one of the supreme ironies of history, it befell that one of the gentlest men who ever lived was persuaded that duty compelled him to undertake that terrible task which he performed with an efficiency as horrible as his own revulsion at it. This is indeed a theme for a great novelist, for a tragedian rather, for a Sophocles, but not for an Inge. Dr. Inge's language, however, served a useful purpose in that it makes it clear to a bourgeois like myself why workmen and peasants in revolt always begin by killing the priests.—ARTHUR READE.

#### 'THE BELOVED ALTRUIST'

It is a truism that there is no cruelty so devilish as that of the black-coated doctrinaire. But I could not have

believed that any decent man could have expressed 'a more than sympathetic admiration' for the Cheka-Ogpu, or referred to Djerzhinsky as 'the beloved altruist.' The butcher's bill of this gentle saint and his henchmen was published, from Soviet sources, in 1922. 'Bishops 28; priests 1,215 [the number of martyrs is now over 8,000]; professors and teachers 6,675; doctors 8,800; army officers 54,000; soldiers 260,000; police officers 10,000; constabulary 48,500; landowners 12,950; intelligentsia and middle-class 355,350; peasants 815,100. Total 1,572,718.' The truth about the 'famine' which cost the lives of from four to six million peasants in 1934 is known at our Embassy at Moscow. If I believed that the religion of Messrs. Strachey, Needham and Reade was Christianity, I should say *écrasez l'infâme* with more energy than Voltaire ever did; but hardly anyone outside England is muddle-headed enough to suppose that 'dialectical materialism' (the Marxist creed) is compatible with Christianity or any other religion. No Roman Catholic is allowed to be a Communist.—DR. W. R. INGE.

#### IV.

### A ROMAN CATHOLIC VIEW

BY THE REV. M. C. D'ARCY, S.J., LL.D.

THE ideals which are at the back of the Communist movement have been made plain by other contributors to this series. To prevent misunderstanding, however, let me say that in so far as Communism has for aim to give a full and proper life to every individual, to effect a satisfying distribution of goods and end the exploitation of the poor, every Catholic is at one with it. Nor, again, is every Communist considered a damnable person, though I will give reasons to hold that the doctrine is a damnable one, appealing as it does to the vivid discontents of the simple and the poor in order to rob them of Christianity, of their God and their human dignity. A Catholic more than anyone ought to fight against injustice and the oppression of the poor, but he knows that the Communist, in cutting the net to free the poor, wounds them mortally with his knife.

One other misconception I must clear away. Many are saying that in repudiating Communism the Catholic Church is taking up a Fascist attitude. This falsehood is part of the propaganda of the

Third International. Finding that direct attacks on religion were not succeeding as well as expected, that body adopted a new device 'to fight against war and Fascism,' and they have calmly grouped under these two headings all believers in religion. Thus in July, 1935, the Central Committee of the Communist International of Youth decided 'to multiply friendly relations with young Christian workers' organizations in order to enlarge the union of youth against Fascism,' and the words Capitalism, Fascism and religion are treated as facets of the same thing. Those, therefore, who have fallen into the habit of calling 'Fascist' whatever opposes the Communist activities are unknowingly made dupes like the victims of well-advertised patent medicines. The truth is this: that the Catholic Church leaves its members free to choose their party in political matters. Even as regards Spain, the *Osservatore Romano* (September 18th) distinguishes carefully between the 'political rivalries' of the civil war and the attack on religion, and it will suffice to recall the advice given by Leo XIII to French Catholics to guide their relations with the French Republic, and the attitude of the present Pope towards Mexico, to convince those of good will that the Catholic Church belongs to no political camp.

From the beginning it has held to the doctrine of the two powers or kingdoms, the one super-

natural and founded by Christ, and the other founded on natural justice. The primary office of the Church is to ensure that its members can learn Christ and practise His commandments; that is, be brought up in their faith, have freedom of worship and admission to the Sacraments, and it is prepared to tolerate much persecution and injustice so long as these are not altogether taken away. This explains its attitude to some non-Communitic States in the world at the present day. As regards the secular moral power, it makes one principal demand, that it should 'suffer little children to come unto' Christ. If, then, a State openly avows that it does not believe in any of the moral truths, such as duty to God and one's neighbour, freedom and personality, and declares that one of its essential aims is to destroy religion, the Church replies by rejecting utterly such a theory of State.

By Communism I do not mean the individual dreams of some of our intellectuals, or the dear vision of a modern, heart-broken Piers Plowman. There is only one form of it which is real for us; that, namely, which descends from Marx, was embodied by Lenin, and now has its seat at Moscow; and I may add that this form of it has, and can have, nothing but contempt for the intellectuals who use it as an *apéritif*. The Communist does not believe in thought, but only in

ought in action. I know, of course, that this can be shown to be nonsense, but it does not come its intellectual ally to press that argument. It is fair, however, for a critic to do so, and were there space I ought to point out that seldom in history has a more childish philosophy held the position of man; and this I have heard admitted more than one of its philosophic friends in this country.

The character of this latter can be roughly pressed in the following propositions. There is reality but matter. But matter is not something abstract. It includes man and his labour. History consists of this action and reaction of man on his material and the material on man. (These sentences are drawn almost straight from Marx's *Capital*.) In being changed, and in changing matter to suit his material needs, man enters into relation with his neighbour and a conflict of production and consumption arises. This gives us the dialectic of history and the transformation of society by means of the struggle of classes. According to the dialectic there must be the constant conflict until, after the exploitation of the poor by the rich, by economic necessity, a change arrives when the proletariat by revolutionary means can destroy the capitalist society and bring that stultifies the first principle of the dialectic) earthly paradise.

According to this view man has no soul; he is a technical brute, playing his part indeed as an active labourer in material progress but totally determined by the economic process. There is no after-life, no spiritual world, no freedom, no personality, no private property. Man is a technical animal, dedicated by the dialectic to a continual war not against himself but his neighbour, and succeeding by class-struggle and hate. As for morality, the following words of Lenin will suffice:

‘We must be ready for sacrifice of every kind, and even if need be to practise everything possible; ruses and tricks, illegal methods; be ready to be silent and hide the truth; in short, it is from the interests of the class war that we deduce our morality.’

Now, as to the Communist attitude to religion and Christianity. I will prove this by quotation, choosing texts almost at random where so many exist:

‘Religion is the opium of the people’ (Marx); ‘Marxism is materialism, and as such it is inexorably hostile to religion’ (Lenin); ‘We hate Christianity and Christians; even the best of them must be reckoned amongst our worst enemies’ (Lunacharsky); ‘We ought so to act that each blow delivered against the traditional structure of the Church, each blow at the clergy, attacks religion in general. . . . Even the blindest see how indispensable is the decisive struggle against the Pope, whether he be called pastor, abbé, rabbi, patriarch, mullah or pope; and this struggle ought to develop no less ineluctably against

God, be he called Jehovah, Jesus, Buddha or Allah' (Stepanoff).

Here is the 1932 programme of the Free Thinkers' Proletarian International, which is in close dependence on the Comintern:

'(1) To augment the number of its personnel; (2) To edit a bulletin for the Press in German, French, English and Russian; (3) To see that all sections have qualified instructors; (4) To begin . . . the publication of an anti-religious review in German; (5) To organize the publication and wide diffusion of cheap propaganda, destined in the first place for Great Britain and America, where the Anti-God movement ought to take root more easily; (6) To organize the presentation of anti-religious films; (7) To establish in each country a definite and precise plan; (8) To organize an exchange between the various sections; (9) To stir up amongst these latter revolutionary competition.'

Finally, a session in 1934 of the same organization laid it down that the groups of the Anti-God should penetrate into the ranks of the Church and Fascism and make a happy hunting-ground of the colonies. The methods now are to be more subtle than formerly, and it is not going too far to say that they consist in making the unwary talk of everything which is not Communist under the name of Fascism, of turning professors and intellectuals into little Red Riding Hoods, of making decent people ashamed of calling evil evil. The Communists have learned the value of Kerenskis!



The Catholic Church stands for the dignity of human nature and for the defence and promotion of the law and love of Christ. It teaches that every being is a person with rights and obligations; that he is unique and loved by God, who gave His life for him; and it is on these principles that it has laid down a social programme or ideal. Take away the love of God and the discipline of the Christian life, and the values even of human life grow dim and man exploits his neighbour. But take away in this twilight of the gods also his soul, as the Communist does, and we have a technical animal who will not be as happy even as a cow flicking off the flies with its tail as it consumes what is produced for its earthly paradise. I have tried to compare accurately the aims of the Catholic Church and Communism; it is for the reader to draw the conclusions and apply them to the unhappy events in Europe. One thing he may rest assured of, that the Catholic, like his divine Master though offered all the kingdoms of the world, can still recognize the prince of liars and the difference between Hell and Heaven. For the rest the reader may well wonder at the lover of liberty encouraging those who sound the knell of all freedom and all human rights, at the pacifist propagating a theory based on class-struggle, hate and violence, and Christians compromising with those who have proudly taken for themselves the

## V.

### THE COMMON GROUND

BY DR. JOSEPH NEEDHAM (FELLOW OF CAIUS  
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OUR attitude to the problem of the relation between Christianity and Communism will be to a large extent conditioned by the emphasis which we lay upon the two great historic contributions to Christianity, Greek neo-Platonism and Hebrew apocalypticism. Here the philosophical evaluation of Time is all-important. If time is illusory, unimportant, or evil, the trend of other-worldliness in Christianity becomes fundamental, earthly affairs lose their significance, and the Kingdom of Heaven is interpreted as a realm of mystical experience unconnected with concrete human relationships. This point of view regards all progress as an absurdity, since the world was always a hard school of chastisement for souls and always will be. It ends in a Manichaeism which denies value to material things even as symbols, and yearns for imaginary blessedness after death.

Sharply opposed to this Graeco-Oriental form of Christianity through the centuries, there has

existed a belief which accepted time as important, real, and not necessarily evil. The world, human behaviour, the conditions of human life, *were* different in the past, and *will be* different, perhaps better, in the future. The Kingdom of God is no unearthly conceptual realm, but a just and happy social order, a 'Magnetic Mountain,' existing already in seminal form and to exist in time to come in all its fullness, drawing towards it to work for its realization men of the most diverse types from all the peoples of the world. Associated with this belief is the sacramental principle, suggesting that the eucharistic common meal is an outward and visible symbol of the distribution of the world's goods in a society of free and equal comradeship, and that the sacrifice which it embodies stands for the sacrifices of all who have died that the Kingdom might come. It is because these two widely diverging trends have existed side by side in an uneasy union in the Christian religion since the first few centuries that the two following propositions may both be true : 'Communism is the heir of the Christian tradition,' and 'Christianity is the opium of the people.'

That there are fairly clear lines of demarcation between civilizations and cultures may be assumed for the present argument. Many feel to-day that we are standing at a turning-point of history analogous to the first century of our era. Many

of us, like Symmachus, are attracted both by the old dispensation and by the new. But those who cry out for a revivification of the old forms, in contradistinction to the new, and the recognition of the achievements and possibilities of the new, seem to be like Julian and Sallustius, who attempted the completely hopeless task of trying to combine Christianity and Paganism under the forms of Paganism. There was obviously at that time, as always in such historic periods, a combination, but it was made by the fathers, who combined Christianity and Paganism under the forms of Christianity.

To a man of goodwill in the first century, well acquainted with his Euripides and his Aeschylus, it must surely have seemed that the Christians had discovered how to do what the teachers of the past had ineffectively wanted and foreshadowed. The legends of the sibyls bear sufficient witness to the conviction of the early Christians that history was on their side, and so, too, the beatification of Virgil. There are very many Christians to-day who feel that by its materialist philosophy and its realistic sociological analysis modern Communism has discovered how to do what Christianity (in our second form) always powerlessly wished to do. In the Middle Ages theologians could curb merchants, if not princes or barons, but when during the Reformation

period the Church surrendered all control of economic affairs, in Catholic no less than in Protestant countries, its last association with social justice was lost. With the growth of science and technology the theologians showed themselves more and more incapable of applying the Christian doctrine of love of our fellow men to the real world of business and industry.

England, indeed, can boast a fine record of eighteenth-century religious hypocrisy on these issues. The clergy who persecuted the Dorset martyrs well knew where Deism would lead to. Yet it was convincingly argued in the book of essays, *Christianity and the Social Revolution*, that Communism has always been an integral, perhaps the essential, element in Christianity. The economic significance of the 'heresies' has never been explored, but it is likely that many besides the Donatists were as Red as the Church of Jerusalem. Throughout the Middle Ages there were the movements which culminated in the Christian Communism of the Taborites and Thomas Münzer's Anabaptists, or here in England the followers of John Ball. In the seventeenth century, with the awakening of the bourgeois class and its rise to power, there were already good Christians who saw perfectly clearly that political without economic equality would not approach the standard of the Gospels. May it be long before the names

of Gerard Winstanley and John Lilburne, the leaders of the Levellers, are forgotten by Englishmen; or, rather, may they soon be remembered, for of the noblest calls to social justice nothing is said in the history books of our schools. Then a century later come Jean Meslier, the Catholic priest who prepared the way for the Communist movement in the French revolution, and Daniel Shays, whose relation to Washington in 1787 was rather like that of Lilburne to Cromwell in 1648. The Christian religion, in fact, has always contained Communist elements implicit within it, but this life of active apocalyptic has always been smothered by the dead weight of mystical Platonism so convenient to the possessing class.

Now Communism to-day says clearly that the love of our comrade is meaningless in a world dominated by the spiritual wickedness of class-distinctions and all that that implies of inequality in the distribution of life's good things; agreeable work, happy leisure, health-giving activity of mind and body. In a world constructed on the principle of the exploitation of man by man there is no room for the development of that natural dignity (so movingly discussed by André Malraux) which savages often have, and which we should wish our comrades all to have. Christianity, at least theoretically, always set a high value on individual human life, but while capitalism

considers such lives simply as 'hands,' having no responsibility for their contact with machine-technique, Fascism thinks of them only as cannon-fodder, man's highest end being a military death on behalf of his tribal state (as for example, General Ludendorff's recent book, *The Nation at War*, abundantly shows). Only Communism confirms and extends the Christian valuation, spreading comradeship and dignity, culture and happiness, in the widest possible circles to all working people, citizens some day of the World Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, where each friend will contribute all that is in him and receive all he desires. All save one thing, the domination over other friends. This the kingdom will not permit, and its education will see to it that the desire does not arise.

In the meantime we live under the shadow of the class-war, in which it is often said that the Christian can take no part. But the class-war is not so much a doctrine as a simple fact of observation. Neutrality in it is impossible, for inactivity directly aids the existing order, heavily favoured as it already is by the inertia of social systems. The relation, 'He that is not with us is against us,' is therefore asymmetric.

On the subject of State power, coercion and 'totalitarianism,' Professor Barker and the former Dean of St. Paul's give out a particularly uncer-

tain note. 'An enforced ideal,' says Professor Barker, in a phrase rightly singled out for criticism by another writer later, 'is a thing utterly opposed to Christianity.' Yet few theologians oppose the compulsory enforcement of the ideal that 'a citizen should be able to go about his lawful occasions without being knocked on the head,' or that every child should receive education. Communism cannot be differentiated from Christianity on such tenuous grounds. All ideals must, if dominant, rest ultimately on some form of coercion, whether mental or physical, until such time as they have become so embedded in the natural instincts of the race that their externality is lost. The worship of the God-State, says Dr. Inge (oddly omitting any reference to Fascism and Nazism), is pure Satanism. Yet it would seem logical that the more righteousness, justice, truth, and love are built into the State structure, the less need remains for an independent Church to witness against it. When that which is perfect (the just social order) is come, that which is imperfect (the ecclesiastical institution) shall be done away. Dr. Inge, it seems, supposes the doctrine 'that ethics are a purely individual matter' to be Communist, but this is so original an opinion that it defies comment.

The common ground lies between Communism and the spirit of Christianity, not its letter. Of the



Churches as institutions we may have the most melancholy expectations. The former Dean of St. Paul's rejects Communism as a movement 'based on hatred' (*The Spectator*, October 9th); no doubt he regards the scourging of the money-changers in the Temple as a passing lapse of good taste. The Secretary of the World's Evangelical Alliance tours Poland to warn the people of the perils of Communism (*The Times*, September 16th), which he describes as 'godless' without further examination of the questions of immanence and transcendence. Mr. F. Buchman thanks God for Hitler, who is keeping Bolshevism out of Europe (*New Statesman*, October 10th). The editors of Roman Catholic periodicals, whether the *Universe* or *Blackfriars*, fulminate against the People's Front in Spain. In the Dominican magazine, it is true, André Toledano is quoted. 'The choice,' he said, 'is between honest-to-God anti-God, and the not-so-honest exploitation of God as the State's Big Policeman plus the safeguarding of clerical life and limb and the material possessions of the Church. If the Left will not *have* God, it does not follow that He *is* on the Right.' The union of the Churches, it has been said, will take place in the last ditch of opposition to world-Communism. But long before then very many Christians will have decided, with John Lewis, that 'The Church must die, to be born again as the Holy Spirit of a righteous social order.'

## OBSERVATIONS

## THE CHURCH AND THE JUST SOCIAL ORDER

Dr. Needham long since mastered the art of saying provocative and refreshing things. His article on 'The Common Ground' is delirious with them. It is a pity that it expires in the commonplace dislike of churches. 'Of the churches as institutions,' he says, 'we may have the most melancholy expectations'—all sicklied o'er with references to *The Spectator*, *The Times*, *The New Statesman*, the *Universe* and *Blackfriars*. One wonders whether he would take his 'expectations' of biology exclusively from the same authorities. Denuded of its moderately relevant parade of history, his argument amounts to what we can hear at any time in Hyde Park, if the weather is fine. He seems to imagine that the 'ecclesiastical institution' exists in order to produce 'the just social order,' and is to be damned because it seems sometimes to aim at something else: 'When that which is perfect (the just social order) is come, that which is imperfect (the ecclesiastical institution) shall be done away.' That consummation is still so distant that ordinary people who cannot think in millenniums may be pardoned for supporting the 'imperfect institution.' It was not a Graeco-Oriental mystic but a Hebrew Apocalyptist who said that 'the Most High created not one world but two.' The Church would not have survived a century, indeed would never have existed, as a committee for clearing slums, adjusting wages and giving everybody a good time. In the want of such heroic philanthropy, however, it did create European civilization such as it was and convince men that their lives were eternally important, teach them to be just, peaceful, industrious and even scientific. Alas, it did not teach them to be rich. Yet it seems hardly fair to condemn the eighteenth-century theologians for failing to understand economic problems which twentieth-century economists are not solving with any conspicuous success.

The chief blemish of Dr. Needham's argument is that it gives us no hint as to what the just social order is or where it is to come from. It sounds grand to say that 'the Church must die to be born again as the Holy Spirit of a righteous social order'—if only one could discover its meaning. Originally there was a Holy Spirit of God. Does this Righteous Social Order promise better things? And how does the Church die in order to be born again? Should the Pope resign? Would it help on the R.S.O. if people stopped praying together? Or ceased to organize leper settlements? Or is it that priests are expensive? Does the existence of nuns somehow interfere with the employment of miners? Does Dr. Needham really suppose that the present world is suffering from too much other-worldliness? If he will consult his authorities, *The New Statesman*, etc., he will find them most laudably interested in this world. It is important to clear up what he does mean, because we poor people are often expensively and even dangerously inspired by windy eloquence about social justice evacuated by people who have abolished the Judge.

There may be Communism *in* the Christian Church. There is certainly none *outside* it—which, though I should hate to agree with most of his opinions, may be, perhaps, what Dr. Inge meant.—THE REV. T. S. GREGORY.

### THE TIME PROCESS AND ETERNAL VALUES

You may have room for some observations on Mr. Needham's article, 'The Common Ground,' published in *The Spectator* of October 30th. It is true—and of capital importance—that Hebraic religion (and Christianity which was based upon Hebraic religion) was distinguished from the outlook of the Greco-Roman world by the value it gave to the time-process. But it is not true

that either Jewish apocalypticism or Christianity was for that reason, indifferent to the hope of a life beyond earthly life. They valued the time-process precisely because it led up to a perfected state of the Divine community under conditions other than those of the physical world we know. Of the two views which Mr. Needham contrasts, the Neoplatonic and the Jewish Apocalyptic, it is the former, not the latter, which was relatively indifferent to 'blessedness after death.' Neoplatonism was indifferent because 'after' implies time, and it held that blessedness was independent of time. Mr. Needham has only to listen to a living Neoplatonist, Dr. Inge. If we identify ourselves with eternal values we thereby enter eternity, and such blessedness needs no extension in time for its fullness. I hope I do not misrepresent Dr. Inge, but that, if I understand it aright, is what his teaching comes to. To some people it appears more Neoplatonic than Christian.

In some forms of Jewish and Christian eschatology a reign of Messiah on earth was predicted, but such a reign was declared to be of limited duration, a prelude only to the eternal state. It is an extraordinary perversion of historical fact to say that for the first Christians the Kingdom of God was 'no unearthly order, but a just and happy social order.' The idea that history leads by a gradual progressive development to a satisfying state of things on earth has come up only in quite recent times. It may be impossible to demonstrate that this view is wrong; but it is demonstrable that it was *not* the view of the early Christians. They expected generally that things on earth would grow worse and worse, till God intervened catastrophically to bring in a reign of unearthly good. Modern Christians hold, I believe rightly, that they ought to do what they can to make the conditions of human life on earth more satisfactory. If they believe that things would be more satisfactory under a Communistic system, they are, as Christians, bound to

strive for a Communistic system. Christianity does not indeed tell them whether things would or would not be more satisfactory under a Communistic system. It tells them only to love their neighbours as themselves, and leaves it to human reason and observation to determine what system, at each stage of men's social development, would secure their greatest good. Christianity does not tell us whether vaccinationists or anti-vaccinationists are right, but if we believe that vaccination is a good thing, love of our neighbours may urge us to get men vaccinated.

While, however, Christians are bound to strive for any social system which they think, on grounds of reason and observation, would bring about a happier state of things on earth, it is emphatically un-Christian to think that any state of things on earth could satisfy the spirit of man, whose exigence is for a good unrealizable under the conditions of earthly space and time. Important as time is, eternity, if there is such a thing, must be more important. Mr. Needham apparently thinks that if there were a just social order that is all the Kingdom of God which men ought to desire. Well, there can be no demonstration in regard to men's apprehension of fundamental values: all each man can do is bear witness to what he sees, or thinks he sees. Only it seems odd that when Mr. Needham so much dislikes what Christianity stands for, he should still seemingly be concerned to get for his view some kind of additional sanction from the old Christian tradition and bring in a fictitious primitive Christianity to supply a 'common ground.' One would have thought it more effective if he said plainly and simply—as all frank anti-religious Communists, Russian or Spanish, would say—that the Hebrew apocalyptists and Jesus and the Christian Church, when they set an other-worldly hope before men, were feeding them with vain imaginations. His position would then be impregnable by argument and would not involve any distortion

of historical fact. Of course the Christian's witness to *his* conviction, that no possible arrangement of things on earth, subject to death and all the limitations of earthly space and time, could save men from sin or still their thirst for God, is equally impregnable by argument.—  
DR. EDWYN BEVAN.

## VI.

### SOCIAL JUSTICE

BY DR. REINHOLD NIEBUHR

THROUGH all human history the strong have exploited the weak, and the shrewd have taken advantage of the simple. The moral protest against exploitation is almost as old as the injustice itself. It begins with the literature of social protest, penned by Babylonian kings and Egyptian priests of uneasy conscience. Of this early literature the Egyptian tract, 'The Eloquent Peasant,' is probably the most striking example.

Neither the Christian nor the Communist can therefore claim for either Christianity or Communism the distinction of having invented conscience or been the first to protest against injustice. Through all the ages man has been a lion who devours the lamb; but he has been a curious kind of lion who dreams of the day when the lion and the lamb will lie down together. Christianity and Communism have merely moulded the sense of justice in diverse forms, according to their basic presuppositions and the historical circumstances of their respective cultures. Such a judgment implies that Marxism is a religion and a culture

in its own right, a fact which Christianity would do well to recognize more clearly. For vast masses of the world's population it is the only serious competitor of Christianity as a basic philosophy of life.

According to the Communist creed Christianity ✓ sanctifies social injustice and Communism intends to abolish it. It may be taken for granted that the difference between the two can hardly be expressed in so simple a comparison. Yet it contains an element of truth.

If the element of truth in this judgment is to be appreciated and separated from the error in which it is involved, it is necessary to make at least one preliminary distinction between types of Christianity. In its attitude toward social injustice European Christianity must be divided into orthodox and liberal Christianity. For our purpose this is a more important distinction than that between Catholicism and Protestantism. The distinctive characteristic of orthodox Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, in its attitude towards social injustice was, and is, that it inclines to regard social injustice as a necessary and perennial consequence of (and even punishment for) human sin. The orthodox pessimistic estimate of human nature, its emphasis upon human depravity, tempts it to complacency towards historic forms of injustice.



Thomas Hobbes' conception of the State is really a kind of illegitimate offspring of this orthodox pessimism. The purpose of the State is to prevent anarchy. Orthodox social philosophy is realistic enough to know that anarchy cannot be avoided without coercion. It is not realistic enough to see that, though force is a necessary evil, it is an evil which breeds injustice; and that injustice cannot be overcome without resistance to it. Catholic and Protestant Christianity thus tend (with the possible exception of Calvinistic orthodoxy) to place too high a premium upon obedience to government and to attach unqualified moral odium to rebellion. Practically this means to give the benefit of political realism to the entrenched social groups and to withhold it from the advancing groups. Historically it tempted Christianity to a morally perverse justification of slavery and serfdom.

Christian pessimism in regard to human nature has so much validity in comparison with modern liberal or Marxian optimism, that it is foolish to regard it simply as a device of the ruling classes for the preservation of their rule. It is nevertheless true that the too unqualified expression of this pessimism, as found in Christian orthodoxy, discouraged basic changes in the political and economic order and served to link Christianity with feudalism in a too intimate alliance. The harmful

effects of this alliance are evident in the history of both Christianity and civilization. Spain is the latest nation to suffer from the social convulsions which have attended the dissolution of a feudalism religiously sanctified since the seventeenth century.

Whatever varied historical forces may have generated what is now known as the Age of Reason, one of its driving impulses was its moral revulsion against feudal injustices. Though avowedly irreligious, the eighteenth century really replaced a pessimistic religion with an optimistic one. Its optimism in regard to both human nature and human history erred as much on the side of romantic illusion as Christian pessimism erred in the direction of moral enervation. It was nevertheless in one sense a recrudescence of the prophetic element in Christianity, which orthodoxy had corrupted. For since the time when the prophets of Israel had demanded social justice and dreamed of the day when an ideal justice would be established, a basic, though easily obscured, element in the Christian religion has been its faith that history is not a meaningless cycle of recurrences but a meaningful development toward justice. It is a question whether the idea of history as a meaningful process could ever have grown upon purely Hellenic ground. In that sense both liberal and Marxian interpreta-

tions of history are the fruits of the Hebrew element in Christianity.

Liberal Christianity is as closely related to the rationalistic and optimistic age of reason, and the bourgeois classes who were its real protagonists, as orthodox Christianity was related to feudalism. Liberal Christianity is therefore not guilty of the same sins as orthodox Christianity. No morally enervating pessimism can be laid to its charge. On the contrary it is guilty, in common with its parent culture, of a too simple moral optimism. It believes in justice: but it believes that justice can be established by pure moral goodwill. If the secular rationalist labours under the illusion that injustice is merely a fruit of prejudice and superstition, and that increasing intelligence is a guarantee of progressive justice, the Christian liberal imagines that a sufficient number of persuasive sermons on the ideal of love will charm all men into something even more perfect than justice: to that love which is the fulfilment of the law. In both instances there is little appreciation of the perennial force of self-interest in all human action. Liberal modernism, whether religious or secular, regards rational impartiality and simple moral goodwill as the only possibility in human conflicts. It does not understand that all social judgments are coloured by interest, and that therefore the achievement

ment of justice is never a purely moral process.

As against these illusions of liberal modernism, Marxism is closer to the truth. As a Christian, who rejects Marxism as a religion, the present writer wishes nevertheless to record his conviction that there are concepts in Marxism indispensable for the solution of the problem of social injustice. These concepts might be stated in the following terms:

1. All human actions and ideals, whatever their pretensions, are coloured by interest. It is therefore impossible to secure justice simply by appeals to conscience.

2. Justice is therefore the fruit of a struggle between the beneficiaries and victims of injustice. The Marxian theory of the class struggle may need some qualification. But this essential proposition is true. Individuals may transcend this struggle between conflicting interests to a larger degree than pure economic determinism is inclined to admit; and the struggle may be qualified by historic forces, such as a constitutional tradition and the general intelligence of a society. But these qualifications cannot change the general pattern. The champions of justice must be, on the whole, the poor rather than the intelligent, a fact which the Hebrew prophets understood, and Aristotle, the Greek precursor of liberal rationalism, did not understand.

3. Injustice is the inevitable consequence of disproportions of social power in Society. Undue privilege follows inevitably in the wake of excessive power. The most significant social power in modern society inheres in the ownership of a social process as private property. Justice in a technical age is therefore bound up with the project of socializing social process. The Marxians may be too dogmatic in their aversion from private property, and may sometimes desire to socialize property which is genuinely private and not social. But the whole of contemporary history validates their thesis that the present system of property automatically makes for injustice; and for a type of injustice which undermines the very foundation of society.

After expressing this measure of agreement with Marxism it is necessary to say in conclusion that there are elements in Marxism, as romantic as utopian liberalism, against which Christian pessimism is a wholesome antidote. The Marxian is wrong in assuming that a faulty social mechanism is the sole cause of injustice, and that the elimination of capitalism will completely destroy both the will and the power of men to exploit their fellow-men. Marxians hope for an ideal social order in which not only social conflict but every form of national conflict will disappear. They have, in other words, a basically romantic con-

ception of human nature, in spite of their provisional realism. They do not realize that social judgments will be determined by interest even in a society in which interests are basically more equal than in the present society. With this romantic conception of human nature, they give themselves to the illusory hope of an anarchistic millennium in which the State will 'wither away.' This illusion allows them to escape the whole problem of the relation of power to justice. They do not see that even if a society succeeds in equalizing economic power, political power will be required to perform this task, that this power may be and will be disproportionately held and that such disproportions will be new occasions for injustice.

Marxism, as all utopianism, is a constitutional disease of naturalism: for naturalism does not understand the relation of the eternal and unconditioned to the processes of the temporal order, and therefore seeks falsely to domesticate the absolute ideal amidst the relativities and contingencies of human history. Against such errors historic Christianity possesses permanently valid correctives. They can and ought to be appreciated even when it is recognized how frequently they have been corrupted and used as tools of oppression.

## VII.

### REVOLUTIONARY CHRISTIANITY

BY CANON F. R. BARRY

'RELIGION is the opium of the people.' But the phrase was invented not by Karl Marx but by an anglican parson, Charles Kingsley. And too often it has been obviously true. No Christian can handle this subject with any sincerity who does not start by frankly confessing that some Churches claiming the name of Christ have allied themselves with reaction and obscurantism, and thus been used as the instruments of slavery. It is not for us to adopt a superior attitude; there are pages enough in the history of England which Churchmen cannot remember without blushing. But we cannot help asking whether Communism is essentially opposed to Christianity or only to terrible perversions of it. If the Bolsheviki had known a Church less bound up with reactionary Tsarism, if the 'Reds' in Spain had known a Church which had not systematically opposed all movements of popular emancipation, would they have wreaked on it such frightful vengeance? It may be that the Communist world-view is incompatible with Christianity; but to say that it is in itself irreligious

seems to me to be missing the point entirely. It is in itself a kind of religion; it may be a false and dangerous religion; but irreligious it demonstrably is not. And it does in a real sense believe in God and acts on the belief which sustains it with an ardour of sacrificial dedication which may put to shame our tepid Christianity. Thus, however much we abuse it, yet Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr is surely right in saying that we cannot accept the avowed irreligion of Marxianism at its face value.

Moreover, what is dynamic in Communism is of collateral Christian descent. As Berdyaef is fond of pointing out—and Dr. Needham insisted in his article—there is a great deal in the Marxian programme which is in fact a secularized version of a strain which runs through the Hebrew prophets and (he might have added) Christian Apocalyptic. The Bible certainly stands for revolution—the invasion of the existing world-order by the ‘powers of the coming age,’ which should annihilate the present system and replace it by one radically new. There is much in the New Testament to suggest that the early Christians would have been quite at home with the revolutionary ideology. It is language, indeed, which they sometimes spoke. Nothing is to be gained by obscuring this. Yet it is quite impossible to identify the Communist world-view with that of Jesus. This is not on account of its ‘materialism’



in the sense of its concern with economic values; for to say that religion ought to be unconcerned with the material basis of living is a bastard form of spirituality which genuine Christianity must condemn. How can we say with the parables in front of us, with the pictures of the Great Physician and the Host of the hungry multitudes enshrined in the evangelical tradition, that Christ's religion is not deeply interested in the material needs of men and women? Ours is a sacramental religion, and must always be profoundly concerned with physical and economic betterment as a means to the fulfilment of persons who are called to be sons and daughters of God.

But there is the point of ultimate opposition between the Marxian and the Christian world-view. The former—just like Fascism and Nazism—is rigorously confined by space and time, and thinks of Man as a purely natural phenomenon; while the very heart and centre of Christ's thinking is that Man truly belongs to another Order, and that the centre of gravity for Man's life is not to be sought in this world at all but in a more than historical reality. In other words, as we shall see later, the fundamental irreconcilability turns on the question—What is Man? This marks the real frontier of Europe. And here Communism, and Fascism—despite their smouldering internecine hatreds—are found together on one side

of the line and the Christian tradition on the other. Yet Communism contains some Christian truth; and perhaps the fairest way of describing it is to call it the latest of the Christian 'heresies,' giving such an exclusive and one-sided emphasis to a real element in the Christian world-view that it becomes misleading, false and dangerous and incompatible with the real thing.

But there is only one constructive answer to it, i.e., complete and authentic Christianity. The clamour for a 'Christian' crusade or a Christian 'front' to oppose Bolshevism ought not to have any influence on the Church. Too often it is merely a pretext for the support of reactionary movements, whether political or ecclesiastical. And my own conviction is that of two evils Fascism is the far greater danger to us and more starkly opposed to Christianity, however much it may use religious language, than the Communism which calls itself atheistic. We should be too wary to fall into that trap. Moreover, Communism does stand for the well-being of the individual—even if a wholly material well-being—and is therefore redeemable by Christianity. But a creed which makes of the State a moral absolute, i.e., which erects into the place of God the *de facto* majority in a human group, cannot by any logical finesse be reconciled with the Christian philosophy.

The various forms of contemporary Fascism,

no less than Marxianism itself, are terrible evidence for the sterility of the creeds on which they are avowedly built. The Hammonds suggested a few years ago in their study of the Chartist risings that the disproportionate violence of those outbreaks was the revolt of impoverished *souls* against a bleak and soul-destroying industrialism which committed outrage on personality and denied Man's need for beauty and love and God. May we not say that the same thing is true of the revolutions on the Continent? They too are the insurrection of souls against a routine of life which seemed meaningless and to offer nothing worth while to live for. We dread their violence, ruthlessness and cruelty; but a merely negative attitude will not save us. We must understand the causes of the disease, and this I believe is at bottom what they are—the assertion of a hunger unsatisfied. The young Nazi and the young Communist use the classical language of conversion to describe their rebirth into the Party, and it does offer them a religious substitute—a purpose to serve and a faith to live by. The only alternative is a true religion. The appalling events in the world of our time confirm the conviction of Christianity that Man *cannot* live by bread alone. The world to-day is hungry for God, for a life that is real, personal and satisfying; and man, if he cannot find God in heaven, must surrender him-

self to a god on earth. The collectives of contemporary politics offer that need a half-way satisfaction. But they leave what is deepest and most characteristic in the constitution of Man unfulfilled; and so long as that hunger remains unsatisfied the subterranean forces burst through, too often in blind, destructive fury. There is only one constructive rejoinder which can liberate all that is best and strongest in us in the venture of co-operative enterprise; and that is the Christian Revolution, which enthrones persons at the heart of politics because it enthrones God in the universe.

Christianity is a Gospel about God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and the God to whom persons are dear. It is thus the religion of personality in a sense which can be claimed by no other. It stands for the fulfilment of persons in organic, ethical community. It is not interested in saving 'souls', for it is an incarnational religion and knows that character has its material factors, its social and economic conditions. On the other hand it can never be content with any ideal of merely temporal happiness, since it is sure that the true end of Man is in nothing less than fellowship with God. It stands for the salvation of persons at all the levels of human experience—biological, psychological and spiritual—into right relationship with God and with one another in God. This it calls the Kingdom of God on earth,

and this it believes is the goal of history. And since for it all human institutions, political, economic or cultural, have their justification and reward in so far as they are instruments of His Kingdom, it can never accept the claim of the State as absolute.

Thus this faith is in essence revolutionary. If the God whom Christians believe in is the sovereign ruler of the universe and the overruling Providence of history, then Christians every time they repeat their creed are pledging their loyalty to a revolution—so to live that the order of this world may be conformed to that divine purpose which has been made manifest in Christ. They cannot remain in the realm of mere ideas nor in the sacristy or the vestry meeting. Christianity is a Gospel of action. If God has visited Man to redeem him, if the common man and woman are no less than inheritors of an eternal Kingdom, then there is inherent in this religion a passion for the fulfilment of persons with all the rights that pertain to their high dignity and an irreconcilable antagonism to all that prevents or mutilates that fulfilment; and of all these evils war is the prince of devils. A resolute will to freedom, peace and justice, to education and human opportunity, is an integral element in Christianity. Its will is firm in the ultimate conviction that God Himself is at work in history, reconciling the world to Himself; and that those who are

dedicated to these causes can draw on the inexhaustible resources of power, healing and regeneration which are at the heart of a spiritual universe. The Christian revolution is incarnate in lives such as those of S. Francis and Charles Gore, David Livingstone and Basil Jellicoe.

In an iron age such as ours, a conventional and defensive Christianity is almost bound to be beaten off the field. It must show its faith by its works. It needs to revive its crusading ardour. The moral initiative is still ours, but it may not be so very much longer. The Christian religion can only win if it shows the same consecrated loyalty, the same power of sacrificial devotion, the same passion for emancipation, the same intense belief in its own cause, as the Komsomol and the Hitler-Jugend. Unless it appears as an exacting claim and demonstrates its effectiveness in action how are the hard-boiled young to believe in it?

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